The meeting was called to order at 4.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

Letter dated 21 November 2000 from the Permanent Representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council
(S/2000/1109)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Israel, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and South Africa, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Lancry (Israel) took a seat at the Council table and Mr. Dorda (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) and Mr. Kumalo (South Africa) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 22 November 2000 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, which will be issued as document S/2000/1112, which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the meeting of the Security Council to be held on Wednesday, 22 November 2000, with regard to the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observe of Palestine to participate in the current debate, in accordance with the rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine), took a seat at the Council table.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in response to the request contained in a letter dated 21 November 2000 from the Permanent Representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, document S/2000/1109. I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/2000/1107, which contains the text of the identical letters dated 20 November 2000 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council.

I call on the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) *(spoke in Arabic)*: Allow me first of all to congratulate you, Mr. President, on presiding over the Council this month and to express to you our gratitude for understanding the very difficult time the Palestinian people are experiencing. I should also like to take this opportunity to particularly thank the President of the Council of last month, Ambassador Andjaba, for the valuable efforts he made to ensure that the Council assume its responsibilities vis-à-vis the explosive situation affecting the Palestinian occupied territories, Jerusalem and the Middle East in general. These and other efforts of the Council led to the adoption of resolution 1322 (2000) — a resolution of great value and significance that has, like others, still not been implemented by the occupying Power, Israel.

I should also like to thank you, Mr. President, for responding so rapidly to the request of the Arab Group to convene this emergency meeting of the Security Council, despite the fact that we are on the eve of a holiday. We commend you for your initiative. That request by the Arab Group was made in the light of the serious escalation of the violence by Israel in the past few hours. In fact, at 6 p.m. Palestine time, Israeli military helicopters, with the assistance of Israeli naval gunships, undertook intensive attacks against numerous targets in Gaza and other locations in the Gaza Strip.

The occupying Israeli forces launched over 50 rocket attacks against Palestinian Authority facilities and buildings, including a police station, a preventive security installation and Fatah movement buildings. In the wake of these attacks and raids, at least one Palestinian was killed, over 70 were injured and considerable material damage was done. But after these attacks — and this is of paramount importance — a state of general panic swept through Gaza's entire population of over 1 million people. There is a threat that this serious escalation in the situation will spread to the entire Middle East region, leading to a situation of unprecedented gravity that might have unknown disastrous consequences.

Since 29 September — one day after the unfortunate visit of Ariel Sharon to Al-Haram Al-Sharif on 28 September — we have sent 14 official letters to the Security Council. In that official correspondence we transmitted, inter alia, the names of the Palestinian martyrs; today their number exceeds 225. We also detailed examples of Israeli conduct, how they have been using their enormous war machine in an excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force, often without justification. We communicated to the Council numerous instances of deliberate murder, either by sniper fire or as a result of the use of other weapons, including heavy weapons such as tanks and other military equipment. We indicated how seriously such deliberate actions have affected so many people. More than 10,000 people have been injured, including 2,000 injuries caused by live ammunitions. Many of those injured will be disabled for life, and one third of the casualties are children under the age of 18.

We also communicated details of the massive destruction that occurred in the bloody attack by the occupying Israeli Power — the destruction of houses, factories and plants — intended to make the land arid and render it unproductive. The movement of people and goods has been prohibited, which has had a deleterious effect on the already weak Palestinian economy.

All of these actions constitute a series of grave violations and breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. Many actions, such as those that I have cited, constitute war crimes under the terms of that Convention. They also represent a grave breach of United Nations resolutions, including the resolutions of this Council.

All of these events have been accompanied by a stalemate in the peace process — a stalemate imposed by Israel when its leaders proudly announced that they have called a time-out in the peace process, as though it were a basketball game.

All of this action has been accompanied by reproaches directed against the Palestinian Authority. The reality is that Israeli policies and practices stem from the presence of Israeli occupiers and the policy of settlement — a policy that has continued even after the beginning of the peace process. The Israelis reproaches demonstrate that their position is clearly racist. How can they accuse the Palestinian people of putting their children in front of murderous Israeli forces? Such an accusation actually carries a clearly racist message. At the same time, Israel has tried to back out of the Sharm el-Sheikh agreement and has engaged in obstructionist actions with regard to the fact-finding committee. That committee was set up with great expectations, but it has been unable to achieve anything. The reason, as the Council has learned and as the press reported this morning, are the obstructionist tactics of Israel. At least one press agency has reported that the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs had sent a letter to the United States Department of State indicating that the time was not yet right for this committee to undertake its work. Yet the committee was announced by President Clinton in accordance with the terms of the Sharm el-Sheikh agreement. However, in the view of the occupying Power, the committee is now undesirable.

What, then, is the bottom line? What has been the consequence of this Israeli campaign that was unleashed on 28 September, and the attack on the first Kiblah — the third-holiest site — in occupied East Jerusalem? The consequence was a vast number of victims and martyrs, and massive destruction. Another consequence was the considerable harm done to the Middle East peace process. The third consequence was the creation of great tensions in the region. The fourth consequence was that the region today, in its entirety, may experience further clashes and confrontations.

Now the question that should be asked in the face of this very serious reality is "How can we put an end to this situation?" The responsibility of the Security Council is consistent and clear in this regard, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. First, specific, concrete measures need to be taken to put an end to this deadly, bloody Israeli campaign being waged against the Palestinian people and

Palestinian civilians. Secondly, the Security Council must provide the necessary international protection for Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation.

Let us be frank with one another. The parties, after all that has happened, cannot themselves alone put an end to this situation. They need the assistance of a third party. We absolutely fail to understand why anyone is objecting to this, and why there is procrastination. Is it emanating from the permanent members or other members of the Security Council, or is it coming from outside the Council?

Since 25 October, almost a month ago, we have been requesting that a United Nations observer force be established. President Yasser Arafat personally participated in a meeting with the Council, and we would like to thank the Council for giving us the opportunity of that special meeting with our President. He explained to the Council all the details of the Palestinian point of view. He requested 2,000 military observers, who would be equipped with light weapons. Why 2,000? Because our estimates regarding the practical requirements on the ground indicate that such a number would be appropriate. This observer force would have to act under the United Nations emblem and auspices and under its supervision. The observers would not be deployed to fixed locations or constant lines, so it is clear that the only objective is to ensure the safety and security of Palestinian civilians.

We took the necessary time to deal with all the constructive proposals, particularly the ideas of France, that were presented on this subject. We tried to take these proposals and ideas into consideration when we finalized our specific proposals.

As for the approval of Israel, we would stress once again that approval by Israel, as an occupying Power, cannot be a prerequisite for the Security Council's enacting the necessary measures. The Council is not dealing here with a domestic situation of one of its Member States; it is dealing with the only United Nations Member State — I repeat, the only United Nations Member State — that the Security Council, in the 25 resolutions it has adopted regarding the region, recognizes as an occupying Power. I repeat: 25 resolutions. This is the only case of its kind.

So we have said that Israel's approval is not a prerequisite for the Security Council measures to be enacted. We think that practical cooperation with Israel is a must for implementation of any resolution the Council may adopt. This conclusion stems from th legal obligation of Member States. This is one of th obligations incumbent on Israel, as a United Nation Member State, under the Charter of the United Nations We have also said that we are all duty-bound — al of us, members or non-members of the Securit Council — to ensure this practical and pragmati cooperation.

Last Friday this Council agreed to entrust th Secretary-General with conducting the necessar consultations on this issue. We commended thi initiative; we responded favourably to the Secretary General's efforts; and we have every intention o continuing to respond favourably to his efforts.

Further, we would say that time is short; indeed i is running out. The toll of casualties is increasing. Th destruction is becoming more serious. Things ar growing more complicated. All this warrants urgen action in adopting the necessary resolution.

In full frankness and candour we urge the Counci to take the necessary measures at the beginning of nex week, so that only one month will have elapsed sinc our first initiative, and so that this action will hav legitimacy in the eyes of the people who are endurin the occupation. It seem legitimate and just for th Council to act in its official capacity by adopting or no adopting the draft resolution before it.

For some time we and the whole world wer awaiting the triumph of the peace process. We wer awaiting the admission of Palestine as a United Nation Member State. Personally, I was expecting to be able t work in a different environment and situation than th one I now find myself in. But, unfortunately, th occupying Power does not even wish to accep anything as fundamental, elementary and self-evide as the fact that the problem resides in occupation itself If the occupying force were prepared to put an end t this occupation then all the disasters would disappear all the ills that our people are experiencing would com to an end and the region would be rid of thes problems.

Why the clashes? Why all the warfare? Why th accusations? The end of the occupation would lead t an immediate end to all these problems. There is th main reason for our misfortune, and therein lies th remedy to it. One does not need to be a genius to com up with this remedy. This has been the fate of al peoples struggling for self-determination, freedom an

independence. Any situation in which there is suffering can be remedied in this manner, and thus we can avoid additional problems and bloodshed.

Let me once again thank you, Sir, for having convened this meeting and for having paid such close attention to what I have been saying.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Israel, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Lancry (Israel): Once again, the Security Council is meeting to consider the grave escalation of violence in Israel and the Palestinian territories. Since the last meeting of the Council on this issue, the situation has, to the great consternation of most parties, continued to deteriorate. Points of friction that had previously been localized and contained in certain areas have spread, engulfing the streets of Jerusalem and other Israeli towns and cities. In the last three days alone, two separate bombings have claimed the lives of innocent, unarmed Israeli civilians. In an unimaginably horrific attack in Kfar Darom, terrorists targeted innocent children, whose only crime was in attempting to reach their classroom.

Just a few hours ago, a car bomb exploded on a crowded street in the Israeli city of Hadera at the height of the rush-hour commute. Three Israeli citizens were killed, and 41 were injured. Once again, we are witness to the inhuman practice of terrorism, to the senseless death of innocent men, women and children, that does not advance the Palestinian cause.

Unfortunately, terrorism is not something foreign to Israelis, and we have had several reminders in the past few days of its tragic consequences. It must be made clear that today's tragedy is a direct result of the release of terrorist prisoners from Palestinian Authority jails. It is not the first time that the Palestinian leadership has given freedom of movement to terrorists and then claimed not to be responsible for their acts.

In this regard, I would like to recall the words of Chairman Arafat, who, in a letter to the late Prime Minister Rabin, expressly stated his commitment to the peace process and the path of negotiated compromise. These words stand in such stark contrast to the words and action of the Palestinian leadership in the past few weeks that they bear repeating:

> "The PLO commits itself to the Middle East peace process and to a peaceful resolution of the conflict between the two sides and declares that all outstanding issues relating to permanent status will be resolved through negotiations."

He further committed himself to restrain terrorist elements from all factions. At that time, Mr. Arafat was committing himself on behalf of all the Palestinian people in order to ensure a calm environment conducive to negotiations.

Indeed, the current unrest and the deplorable response of the Palestinian leadership give rise to serious doubts on whether the Palestinians are intent on maintaining that fundamental commitment made in September 1993. Yet, despite these acts and numerous others which have transpired over the last several weeks, no United Nations body — not the General Assembly meeting in an emergency session; nor the Economic and Social Council, which this morning passed a biased and one-sided resolution condemning Israel; nor the Security Council — has spoken one word of condemnation of the Palestinians.

Perhaps now the international community will take notice of the fact that Israeli lives are, as they have been for nearly two months, continuously in peril. Perhaps now the world is capable of understanding that, while Palestinian lives are endangered only when they violently attack Israeli soldiers, Israelis are targeted for the simple fact that they are Israeli.

By failing to speak any words of condemnation of the Palestinians, the international community has basically lent its approval to the unspeakable acts of the Palestinians – the lynching of two Israeli soldiers in Ramallah, the desecration of sacred Jewish holy sites in Nablus, the attacks on innocent children in Kfar Darom and Hadera and the continuous incitement in the official media. This failure will only further encourage them to continue along this violent route. I cannot stress this point enough.

Palestinians are sustaining injuries as a direct result of their own violent provocations. Palestinians are sustaining injuries when they confront Israeli soldiers and civilians with machine guns, firebombs and other explosive devices. Palestinians are sustaining injuries when, at the behest of their leaders, they brutally attack and terrorize innocent civilians.

The same is not true of casualties on the Israeli side. Israeli civilians have been attacked as they travel on roads, shop for groceries in the marketplace and sit

peacefully in their homes. The Jerusalem neighbourhood of Gilo has continuously come under fire from snipers in nearby Palestinian villages, resulting in a number of injuries. A car bomb exploded last week in the crowded Jerusalem market of Mahani Yehuda, killing two Israeli civilians. On Monday, Israeli schoolchildren were deliberately targeted by the Tanzim, the paramilitary group that is an arm of Chairman Arafat's own Fatah faction, killing two civilians and critically wounding several others. A day later, an 18-year old Israeli, Itamar Yefet, was murdered by a Palestinian sniper. None of these individuals, least of all the children who were attacked have sought involvement in the current crisis. Nevertheless, the Palestinians consider them legitimate targets, due merely to their nationality.

The dichotomy extends to the political level as well. Through all the recent violence, Israel has tried to exert the maximum possible restraint and to minimize casualties to the greatest extent possible. We have expressed our deepest sorrow at the loss of life sustained by both sides. The Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Israel and their spokespeople have regularly called upon Chairman Arafat to restrain his people and to return to the path of peaceful negotiations.

In contrast, Palestinian leaders have called, and continue to call, for an escalation of the conflict. The attempt to assert the moral equivalence of soldiers' defending themselves against mobs of Palestinians calling for their blood, and Palestinians carrying out terrorist attacks against civilians in the heart of the Israeli cities, is nothing less than depraved. Yet, there is no international outcry. There is no call for a commission of inquiry to investigate Palestinian wrongdoing. There are no resolutions passed in condemnation of Palestinian violations. There is not even a clear call for the Palestinians to relinquish the path of violence and return to the only legitimate mechanism for addressing their grievances — through peaceful, bilateral negotiations. The only words of outrage and condemnation that the international community can muster are directed solely at Israel.

I should like to remind the members of the Council of the statement of the Secretary-General, who, after visiting the region and conducting extensive meetings with both sides, cautioned the members of the international community to weigh their words carefully. I submit to you, Mr. President, that the United Nations official language that has been used until now has not heeded this warning. I sincerely hope that the same will not hold true today.

The attempt by the Palestinians to give this armed intifada the veneer of a legitimate struggle, as though it were their only means of achieving their objectives, is a gross misrepresentation of reality. The Oslo peace process has provided a viable mechanism for the Palestinians to realize their goal of self-determination. The face-to-face negotiations conducted within that framework have yielded several key peace agreements and have created a situation in which 98 per cent of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza live under Palestinian rule. Moreover, the Oslo process has the potential to end the conflict once and for all, meet the needs of both sides and prevent further bloodshed.

Chairman Arafat, however, has been unwilling to embrace the reality of peace and recognize that the conflict is over and that the only path to peace and security is through negotiation and compromise. He knows full well that an honourable and just peace was within reach at Camp David, and yet, instead of seizing the moment, he chose to turn his back.

In calling for the deployment of a United Nations protection force, the Palestinians are seeking to depart from the bilateral track which was mandated by the Oslo agreement and to pursue their goals unilaterally. In fact, Chairman Arafat has first and foremost to protect himself from his own destructive initiative, the independence intifada, which is the source of all the suffering that has transpired in recent weeks. As I have said before, an international force, whether of peacekeepers or of observers, is not needed to stop the violence, nor is it clear that such a force would even be successful.

There is, however, a clear and direct way to end the bloodshed. The international community must call upon the Palestinian leadership to exert every effort to stop the violence, the rioting, the use of live ammunition, the use of machine guns, the sending of children to the front lines of rioting crowds and the use of terror against civilians. This ability is well within their power, and I would urge the members of the Council to call upon Chairman Arafat to see that this is done.

We still expect that the Palestinian leadership will fulfil its basic commitment, as expressed in Chairman Arafat's letter to Prime Minister Rabin and in

subsequent agreements. I must emphasize that Chairman Arafat spoke on behalf of all Palestinian people, and that he cannot depart from this responsibility. We can no longer accept the reprehensible division of labour between the Palestinian Authority on the one hand and Hamas and the Islamic Jihad on the other.

Chairman Arafat, as the unchallenged leader of the Palestinian people, has to assume, not only the glory of that office but also, sometimes, the misery of the task. Regardless of the current situation, Israel's ultimate objective will always be to secure a lasting and comprehensive peace with the Palestinians and with all our neighbours. We will continue to strive towards that goal, notwithstanding the numerous obstacles that imperil that lofty objective.

We believe that the Security Council, as the organ with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, is duty-bound to encourage the parties to return to the path of bilateral negotiation and compromise. The Council must call upon the Palestinians to adhere to the commitments they have undertaken to renew security cooperation with Israel and to call, in clear and unequivocal terms, for an end to the violence and a return to the negotiating table.

Were the Palestinians to take these actions, I can assure the Council that the bloodshed would end immediately. That is, by the way, my answer to the question raised by the Permanent Observer of Palestine, Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa, who asked, "How can we put an end to this situation?" It may sound unrealistic, but it is that simple. If Chairman Arafat wills it, it is not a dream.

Mr. Holbrooke (United States of America): I thank Ambassador Lancry and Ambassador Al-Kidwa for their statements today.

For over 50 years, this great historic institution, the Security Council, has been the site of many important debates on the Middle East. The history of the Middle East has been written not only in the region but in this Chamber, sometimes productively, sometimes less so. I do not feel that we are making a contribution to peace with the kind of discussion we are having here today, and I must say so quite frankly. I do not view this kind of meeting as responsive to the mandate of the Security Council to be a forum for conflict resolution. I believe that this is much more in the nature of a meeting designed to exchange verbal barbs which are best left to different forums, and I am saddened to see the Security Council, a historic organization with a historic role, diminished in this way. Nonetheless, we participate in this meeting, as we always do, because the United Nations is the central Organization of the world, and the Security Council is its most important organ.

The cycle of violence in the Middle East has tragically escalated again today with the bombing of another busload of Israeli citizens, this time in Israel itself, between Tel Aviv and Haifa. This morning in Gaza, a number of Palestinians were killed by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) in circumstances that, in the words of Secretary Albright this morning in Washington, are still unclear.

We continue to believe that the parties must take action to end the violence, to maintain calm and to return to negotiations. This is the only viable path to peace, as Chairman Arafat and Prime Minister Barak have repeated time and time again.

At the start of this crisis, the Security Council met in extended sessions and called for an immediate end to the violence and a return to negotiations. Our Government disagreed with the one-sided tenor of that resolution and registered its disapproval by abstaining on resolution 1322 (2000). We did, however, certainly concur with those portions of the resolution that called for an end to violence and stated that that was of paramount importance in maintaining the peace process.

To that end, our valiant Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, President Clinton and other world leaders worked hard to bring the parties to Sharm el-Sheikh to reach agreement on ending the violence. In this regard, President Mubarak of Egypt played an especially important role.

Members of the Council called on the parties to implement the obligations they accepted at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit without delay to end the violence, to set up a fact-finding committee and to discuss how to best resume negotiations. There has been some progress in implementing Sharm el-Sheikh, and we must continue to urge follow-through by both parties on their commitments.

We have reported to the Council on our efforts, undertaken in consultation with the Secretary-General,

to establish the fact-finding committee agreed to at Sharm el-Sheikh, and we note with approval that Secretary-General Annan has already met with Senator Mitchell and plans to meet with the entire committee in the very near future.

In that meeting, Senator Mitchell outlined the committee's intended plan of action and the committee will gather here in New York this weekend to begin its work. The committee's mandate is to investigate the recent violence, with the objective of preventing its recurrence. I urge the Council and all United Nations Members to extend unambiguous support to this committee.

Today is a sad day as well for the United Nations. Instead of lending support for efforts undertaken at Sharm el-Sheikh by both parties, the United Nations has taken actions that undermine bilateral efforts at reaching peace. This morning, the Economic and Social Council narrowly endorsed a resolution condemning Israel and calling for the creation of a redundant inquiry commission and the dispatch of rapporteurs, who will contribute little to ending the violence that has gripped the region in the past two months. That measure was not necessary and it was supported by less than half the members of the Economic and Social Council. In fact, only 21 members of the Economic and Social Council voted for the resolution, out of a membership of 53, if I am not mistaken.

We have made clear our view in Geneva, in the General Assembly and in this Chamber that rhetoric and unbalanced criticism diminish the role of the United Nations and the United Nations opportunity to play a constructive role at conflict resolution. The Security Council will continue to follow events in the region closely and has already directed the Secretary-General to explore ways in which the United Nations could assist the parties.

Regarding the proposal for a United Nations observer or military presence, I repeat our position — and I cannot state this too clearly — that any proposal to introduce outside observers, peacekeepers or any other form of United Nations-sponsored presence in the region requires the agreement of the parties to the conflict. They are in this room here today; they have met; they know each other well; I believe they respect each other as diplomats. Let them work it out and let us, the Security Council, help them get there and then endorse it, rather than participate in attempts to impose something that is opposed by one side or the other.

Let me add also and be very clear, because several people have made the analogy to East Timor a year ago, that when we met on East Timor 14 months ago, we did not impose a solution on Indonesia. It was negotiated by the Security Council on behalf of the world community and accepted by the Indonesians. That is how we got there and Ambassador Andjaba deserves great credit for his role in that, as did his colleagues, many of whom are in this room. The analogy to East Timor is correct and that is the analogy we should follow, but let us not misapply it or misstate it.

We must stand ready to help the parties in the Middle East to implement the decisions they reached to restore calm and return to negotiations. Engaging in one-sided discussions is of no value and will aggravate rather than reduce the tensions in the Middle East.

In conclusion, allow me, on instructions, to quote briefly from Secretary Albright's press statements this morning in Washington:

> "Both Israelis and Palestinians need to accept the reality that there is no place for violence, incitement and economic pressure in a genuine search for Israel-Palestinian peace. Whatever their differences on permanent status issues, the only place for the parties to resolve them is around a negotiating table, not through unilateral actions designed to pressure, to intimidate and to create facts on the ground. There is no unilateral answer to this conflict and there is no way to reconcile violence with negotiations.
>
> "Clearly, both Israelis and Palestinians feel they are the aggrieved party and each feels the other has failed to live up to its commitments, but now is not the time for trading accusations. Now is the time for both to make good on commitments to take the practical steps agreed to and to work to repair the damage to a negotiating process and a partnership that still holds great potential and promise.
>
> "Fulfilling commitments and creating a structure of accountability is essential. In this regard, we" — that is, the United States — "will be talking to Prime Minister Barak and Chairman

> Arafat about creating a mechanism which will allow Israelis and Palestinians to carry out these commitments. The United States, for our part, will continue to help Israel and Palestine as they help themselves to turn the current situation around and to move forward to an Israeli-Palestinian agreement."

That is how Secretary Albright concluded. Once again, I would ask the people who care about peace not to begin the issue by calling for public meetings in the Security Council, but to end it with public meetings in the Security Council and to approach these issues in the spirit of quiet diplomacy which is going to be necessary to reduce the growing tension in the region.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation is deeply alarmed by the further escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli confrontation. The growing wave of terrorist acts and retaliatory measures further destabilize the situation in the Middle East.

The leaders of Israel and the Palestinian Authority must do all they can without delay to stop the escalation of tensions and to prevent the situation from spinning definitively out of control. No reasons can justify the increased use of force that is claiming new victims among the Palestinian civilian population. At the same time, it is necessary to adopt strict measures to prevent the criminal acts by extremists to kill Israeli citizens.

We stress the need for a speedy start to the work of the fact-finding committee to establish the facts behind the tragedy and to support the efforts of the Secretary-General to that end. In the light of the continued deterioration of the situation, it is also essential to step up international assistance in the implementation of earlier agreements in order to break the chain reaction of violence. This will require coordinated steps on the part of the sponsors of the peace process and other interested parties.

Recognizing its responsibility for the fate of the Middle East settlement, Russia continues to strive energetically for a speedy settlement to the conflict, which is wreaking terrible harm on Palestinians and Israelis alike. These tasks are the subject of the ongoing concern of the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, and Foreign Minister Ivanov, who are maintaining close contacts with the Secretary-General of the United Nations and their colleagues in the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Israel and the Palestinian leadership.

The Security Council and the Secretary-General must keep the situation in the West Bank and Gaza in sharp focus, particularly in the context of protecting the civilian population. They must seek truly to assist an end to the violence and the return of the parties to the negotiating table. At the same time, in seeking a rapid normalization of the situation, we must not lose sight of the need to resume the regional negotiating process. It is essential for lessons to be learned from current events and for effective measures to be adopted to consolidate the very architecture of the peace process in order to make it more stable and irreversible, given the close interrelationships between all the components of the Middle East knot.

The path to a comprehensive settlement lies through the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the Madrid principles, the bases for achieving peace in the region.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): The Security Council is meeting once again this evening to express the extreme concern of the entire international community at the unleashing of increasingly uncontrollable violence, which inexorably leads the Palestinian and Israeli peoples into a never-ending spiral of hatred, repression, vengeance and death.

Inexcusable acts of murderous violence, disproportionate repression, more and more victims – basically on the Palestinian side. Every day the escalation increases one more step. On behalf of France and on behalf of the entire European Union I wish to express condolences to the families of all the victims. I also wish forcefully to say that there is nothing inevitable about the continuation of this tragedy. It is possible to put an end to it. An end must be put to it.

On 20 November the 15 Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the European Union met and adopted a declaration the terms of which I wish to recall for the Council:

> "For weeks, every day has seen more deaths, Palestinian or Israeli. That is not tolerable. The European Union appeals to the sense of responsibility of both sides, urging them not to respond to provocation.
>
> "The lack of progress achieved in the peace process, including on the settlements' problem,

lies at the heart of the Palestinian people's frustration and of the violence.

"The European Union exhorts the Israeli and Palestinian leaders immediately to honour in full the commitments they made in Sharm el-Sheikh five weeks ago now and in Gaza on 2 November.

"It asks the Israeli authorities:

"to withdraw their armed forces to the positions they occupied prior to 28 September and to put an end to the restrictions imposed on the movement of people and goods in the Palestinian territories;

"to lift the financial sanctions imposed on the Palestinian Authority;

"in cases where the intervention of the security forces appears absolutely indispensable, to use only non-lethal methods, in accordance with the appeal issued by the United Nations Secretary-General.

"It asks the Palestinian Authority:

"to do its utmost to end the violence;

"to give strict instructions to the security forces in order to stop the attacks against the Israelis, in accordance with the announcement made by President Arafat.

"The European Union asks the fact-finding commission — created following the Sharm el-Sheikh summit, and in which the European Union is represented by Mr. Javier Solana — to begin its work on the ground as soon as possible.

"It supports the United Nations Secretary-General's endeavours to explore with the parties, the terms and conditions of the deployment of an observer mission, in accordance with the mandate given by the Security Council.

"It continues to support President Clinton's efforts and personal commitment in the search for peace.

"The aim naturally remains the resumption of the dialogue and peace negotiations, the only way out of the current crisis. The protagonists know this. The top priority is the cessation of violence.

"The European Union is ready to contribute to this. It is ready to shoulder its responsibilities."

I should like, following this quotation from the declaration by the European Union, to emphasize, once again, something that is clear — that there is no alternative to the quest for peace. Violence must come to an end and the peace negotiations must resume on the basis of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as the Oslo Accords.

The Security Council can play a useful role with the consent of the parties to contribute to the search for peace. The Secretary-General, last Friday, received from the Council a mandate to consult with the parties on the possibilities for, and the acceptable modalities for, an observer mission of the United Nations. It is our fervent hope that an agreement can rapidly be reached.

The events in recent days show that this is both necessary and urgent.

Mr. Ouane (Mali) *(spoke in French)*: Mali associates itself fully with the statement which will shortly be made by South Africa on behalf of the Movement of the Non-Aligned. I should also like, in my capacity as Coordinator of the Non-Aligned Caucus in the Security Council for November to associate the other members of the Caucus with that statement.

Nevertheless I wish here, in my national capacity, to make a few brief comments. First, to recall the constant position of Mali in favour of a just and lasting settlement of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. In that respect, we firmly condemn the violence of the last week which led to numerous casualties in the civilian population, in particular, the Palestinian population. We deplore the escalation of this violence and its growing socio-economic repercussions. We would urge the parties to show greater restraint in order to restore calm and promote the resumption of dialogue.

And secondly, Mali fully supports the efforts of the Secretary-General, particularly the four priority objectives that he defined at the Security Council meeting on 17 November.

Also, the agreements of Sharm el-Sheikh offered some promise for the peace process, which is why we would urge the parties to implement those accords strictly.

Mali welcomes the talks in Washington and all efforts to achieve peace.

My third comment relates to the dispatching of observers to the field. This is a positive measure that could usefully contribute to the cessation of violence. The Council should attribute to it the highest priority. This is a requirement of the international community and the Organization's credibility is at stake.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Violence, violence and more violence. This is the only news we are getting out of the Middle East for nearly two months. Given the alarming deteriorating situation in the area, this meeting could not have been more timely.

Permit me at this point to offer my delegation's sincere thanks to you, Mr. President, for convening this open meeting of the Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. We offer our sincere condolences to the families of all victims of recent violence in the region.

At the outset, allow me to reiterate Bangladesh's total and unwavering support for the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people for a sovereign and independent homeland of their own. We believe that a just, lasting and honourable resolution of the whole Arab-Israeli conflict can be achieved through the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

I would like to express my delegation's deep concern and anxiety about the volatile situation in the Middle East caused by continuing violence, by heavy loss of life among innocent civilians and by Israel's continued use of excessive force and acts of provocation against the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. We condemn such provocation in the strongest terms.

The latest Israeli missile attack does not stand up to any logic. The bombing of a school bus, which claimed two civilian lives and injured schoolchildren, was a cowardly act of terrorism, and we condemn it. This afternoon's news of further violence is, again, very disturbing. Resorting to force and violence has only served to deal a mortal blow to the peace process.

It is sad that the Middle East situation had to deteriorate so fast, particularly when it seemed that the peace process was about to make a breakthrough. We would like to commend the Palestinian leadership for its commitment to reaching a peaceful solution to the Middle East issue. Reaching an agreement at Sharm el-Sheikh, against all odds, was eloquent testimony to the Palestinian leadership's commitment to peace.

Here, my delegation would like also to express its deep appreciation for the continuing efforts of the Secretary-General to contribute to a lasting solution of the Palestinian issue, including his present involvement in the dispatch of a fact-finding mission to the area. We believe that subsequent deployment of international monitors would help ease the situation in a big way.

Bangladesh has lent its support to the Middle East peace process from the very beginning. We have not lost trust in its ultimate success. We urge the Palestinians and the Israelis to make their best endeavour to put an end to the violence which has vitiated the atmosphere in the region. Bangladesh strongly believes that, once violence is shunned and once dialogue begins, the peace process can indeed be revived.

Mr. Wang Yingfan (China) *(spoke in Chinese)*: The past few days have seen a drastic escalation and broadening of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. There has been a large increase in the number of casualties on both sides, including many innocent children. Casualties on the Palestinian side have been more serious, the economy of Palestine has experienced a serious setback, and the suffering of the civilian population has intensified.

China is opposed to violence in any form. All along, we have called on both sides to exercise restraint and to take all necessary measures to prevent the situation from deteriorating further. In the current circumstances, we urge the Israeli side in particular to exercise restraint. The use of excessive force can only result in a vicious cycle of uncontrollable violence and conflict, thus making the prospect of reviving the Middle East peace process even more remote. This is a very dangerous moment for the entire situation in the Middle East. We are convinced that peace remains the option for all parties: it is the only option.

In accordance with his mandate from the Security Council, the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, is engaged in mediation and consultation among the parties concerned. China supports the Secretary-General's efforts. We call on all parties concerned, especially the Israeli side, to cooperate actively with the Secretary-General, and we support the early start of work by the international fact-finding committee. We should give serious consideration to the proposed

deployment of international observers in the area of conflict in order to create favourable conditions for easing the situation and for a resumption of peace talks.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom welcomes this opportunity to discuss the increasingly serious situation in the West Bank and Gaza. We fully associate ourselves with the European Union declaration, which Ambassador Levitte has just quoted and which was agreed by European Union foreign ministers on 20 November.

We urge both the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority to implement the understandings that were agreed at Sharm el-Sheikh and those that were agreed subsequently, and to take immediate steps to bring an end to the violence. We condemn all violence. It was a cowardly act to bomb the school bus in Gaza on 20 November. But the kind of excessive retaliatory action which we have seen in recent days and weeks cannot be justified and cannot be in the interest of peace and of the resumption of negotiations. Violence followed by retaliation followed by more violence, as we have seen in today's shameful bomb, is a dead end. It leads nowhere.

We need to see an early return to diplomacy, and we therefore welcome the first meeting of the fact-finding committee, which will take place over the coming weekend; we hope that the work of the committee will proceed expeditiously. We also welcome and support the efforts of the Secretary-General and of others to find a mutually acceptable basis on which to allow international observers into the West Bank and Gaza. We continue to believe that neutral observers, with the agreement and cooperation of both parties, could play a constructive role in ending the violence.

There was nothing in the statements we heard from Palestine and Israel this afternoon to indicate that the parties themselves will be able to bring violence to an end without outside help.

The Security Council has an essential role to play and should continue to keep the situation under close observation.

Ms. Durrant (Jamaica): My delegation wishes to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open meeting to discuss the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

On 7 October, the Security Council adopted resolution 1322 (2000), which called for the immediate cessation of violence, and for all necessary steps to be taken to ensure that violence ceases, that new provocative actions are avoided, and that the situation returns to normality in a way which promotes the prospects for the Middle East peace process. Since then, the Security Council has had the opportunity to be briefed in private meetings with the President of the Palestinian Authority, with the Permanent Representative of Israel and with the Secretary-General.

Today's meeting is a signal of the depth of our concern at the deteriorating situation, which now poses a threat to the stability of the region. We are concerned at the almost daily loss of life, in many cases resulting from the use of excessive force; nearly 300 persons, many of them Palestinians, have lost their lives, and more than 6,000 civilians have been injured. Jamaica deplores the deaths and injuries among civilians including innocent children, whether Palestinian or Israeli, and we convey our sympathy and condolences to the bereaved families.

The suffering of the people has been further aggravated by the serious humanitarian and economic situation in the Palestinian territories and by the plight of vulnerable civilians, despite the strenuous diplomatic efforts of the Secretary-General and of the leaders of several countries — particularly the Presidents of Egypt and of the United States of America — to bring peace to the region. We urge the parties to adhere to the ceasefire agreement reached at Sharm el-Sheikh and to refrain from retaliatory action. The establishment of a fact-finding mission to inquire into the tragic events is an important part of that process. We urge that its work begin forthwith.

A proposal has been made for the deployment of a United Nations observer mission. We continue to believe that this proposal, as well as others that could deter further violence and act as confidence-building measures and promote dialogue between the parties, deserves the serious consideration of all concerned.

Jamaica continues to encourage an end to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through an active negotiating process that takes into account the right to security of all States in the region, including Israel, as well as the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Bearing in mind the responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of peace and security, it is important for the Council to remain actively seized of this matter, to continue to support the diplomatic initiatives of the Secretary-General, and to continue to work to bring about a lasting and comprehensive peace within the framework of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Mr. Ben Mustapha (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): We would like to express our deepest gratitude to you, Mr. President, for having responded so promptly to the request to convene this urgent public meeting to discuss the grave and deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Security Council is meeting formally for the third time in a month and a half to consider the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. The holding of that many formal meetings in such a brief period, in addition to the many consultations that have been taking place on this question and the resumed emergency special session of the General Assembly, illustrate the gravity and deterioration of the situation in the occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem — a deterioration that has been taking place since last September and that was eloquently described by the Secretary-General after his visit to the region.

In order to confront that explosive situation, the Security Council adopted resolution 1322 (2000) and appealed to Israel, as the occupying Power, to avoid any escalation. Unfortunately, the situation continues to worsen further, due to Israel's decision to resort to the policy of excessive force and vengeance — without taking into account the grave consequences of its actions — in order to impose its will and to create a fait accompli — in other words, more occupation. Even though there is evidence of relative calm after Chairman Arafat's efforts, the forces of the Israeli occupation have once again resorted to the excessive use of force against Palestinian civilians and the posts and symbols attesting to the existence of the Palestinian Authority. The most recent reaction of the occupying forces was to bomb Gaza intensively using all sorts of weaponry, including air, land and sea forces.

My country, which is actively and sincerely taking part in the peace process, profoundly regrets this grave and sad evolution of the situation. We express our profound concern at the intensification and escalation of violence carried out by Israeli forces that has daily produced a growing number of victims and brought harm to the Palestinian population. Tunisia vehemently condemns these repeated acts of aggression, which violate the most fundamental rights of human beings, namely, the rights to life and dignity. In addition, those actions also pose a threat to the peace process.

Tunisia appeals to the two co-sponsors of the peace process and to the international community as a whole to assume their responsibilities in the face of this dangerous situation that threatens international peace and security. We call on Israel to quickly assume its responsibilities under Security Council resolutions — the most recent of which is resolution 1322 (2000) — and the Fourth Geneva Convention and other international instruments. We further call on Israel to renounce the policy of force, which will solve nothing, and to act in a way consistent with international law and agreements.

We heard Ambassador Holbrooke describe the background of this conflict and the Council's reaction to it over the course of 50 years. It has been said that we are moving back to the time when the Council created two separate entities. But we must ask: what of the future form of the Palestinian State we are discussing today? Is this a question of an autonomous entity? Where is that Palestinian State we created? We must base our discussions on reality, not on delusions and distortion of facts.

The representative of Israel spoke of Israeli forces being attacked. Well, where are those forces? Are they inside Israel? Our countries know the meaning of occupation. Is resistance to occupation an act of aggression? When violence comes from official authorities, it can only engender more violence. Peace can only be established in an atmosphere conducive to peace. There is no other option open to the parties but the choice of peace and a return to the negotiating table. That is why we repeat once again today our sincere appeal to Israel to end its acts of repression. Many people have experienced such occupation. We know the consequences of such a policy. We call on Israel to take measures to return normalcy to the region and to create a climate conducive to the gradual establishment of confidence, a requirement for the continuation of peace negotiations.

In the same vein, like the majority of members of the Council, we believe the time has come for the Council to act in this critical situation by taking the necessary measures to create a protection force for Palestinian civilians — something that has been called for by Palestinians themselves, as well as by many in the international community. We hope the Secretary-General will continue his mission so that the Council may continue to give life to this legitimate project to protect civilian Palestinians under occupation.

The situation confronting Palestine is a grave one, and it poses inherent threats to the peace efforts in the region and to the peace and security of the region in general. This situation must not continue. It must not be accepted as a fait accompli and as part of the daily lives of the people of the region, where there have been so many victims. The rights of the Palestinian people must be protected. They must be able to create their State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Based on these views, we believe it is up to the Security Council and all parties concerned to act rapidly so that the fact-finding committee can do its work to determine responsibility for the violence. More than ever before, this situation requires a sincere and serious approach by the international community, and especially the Security Council, for the dangers to the future of the region are incalculable.

It is time to reverse the situation. The priority of the international community is to protect the Palestinians and to put an end to the acts of violence, aggression and violations of international law. Israel's responsibility is clear. What it must do is clear. The international community, including this Council, have recalled this on many occasions. It can start by ending the violence and facilitating the work of the fact-finding committee. My country is among those that have always participated sincerely in the peace process. But this process can only succeed if it is based on international legitimacy and United Nations resolutions, and not on a faulty basis. This is the only way to bring about the success of the peace process, which, while being in the interest of all, is also in the interest of both Palestinians and Israelis and in the interest of peace and security in the Middle East.

Mrs. Ashipala-Musavyi (Namibia): The South African representative will soon make a statement in his capacity as the Chairman of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and my delegation would like to associate itself with that statement. We also support the statement made by the Coordinator of the NAM Caucus for the month of November, the delegation of Mali.

We thank you, Mr. President, for having called this timely meeting to deliberate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. Before my brief remarks, let me express my delegation's condolences to all the bereaved families and to take this opportunity to express our thanks and appreciation to the Arab countries and others outside the region who have taken into their care the injured Palestinians.

Recently we had the honour and privilege to listen to a briefing by President Arafat, a briefing that included, among other things, a request for the United Nations to deploy an observer force in the Palestinian occupied territories. As my delegation has stated on several occasions, we support that request, and we have also emphasized that it is a request that is in line with Security Council resolution 904, which was adopted on 18 March 1994 and called for the protection of the Palestinians. Therefore, we believe that we, as the Council, have a duty to follow through with the implementation of our resolutions.

The events occurring in the occupied Palestinian territories and in the region at large are cause for severe concern and warrant corresponding and urgent action by the Security Council. Time is of the essence, and in view of the ongoing inputs of the Secretary-General in the context of Security Council resolution 904 (1994), we believe that the deployment of the United Nations observers will save lives, calm emotions and pave the way for restoring the peace process. We must restore the peace process because in the end we have to deal with the fundamental problem that is the cause of all this, namely the occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel.

My delegation concurs with the Permanent Observer of Palestine that the parties need assistance, and that is, I believe, why we are here. We are here to help the parties make peace. In this context, we thank all those who have continued to contribute to the search for peace, but we believe that the time has come for the United Nations to become fully engaged.

Let me reiterate that a comprehensive settlement of the present conflict can only be achieved by granting the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination. Full implementation of Security Council resolution

242 (1967) and resolution 338 (1973) are essential to a lasting solution to this conflict.

Mr. Listre (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Unfortunately, for some days we have been witnessing a marked deterioration in the Middle East with a heightening of confrontation and increased loss of human lives. I wish to express the sorrow and concern of Argentina at the tragic events that continue to occur in Gaza, the West Bank and Israel. I also wish to convey my Government's condolences to the families of the victims of the recent wave of violence.

The concern and alarm on the part of Argentina are increased by the acts of terrorism that occurred yesterday and today, acts of which Israeli children and the peaceful population were innocent victims in a marketplace in a situation that cannot be described as provocative. We ask the parties to expressly condemn those acts. We ask the parties to condemn those acts of terrorism with the same conviction with which we condemned Israel for the excessive use of force and with the same conviction that we asked for the implementation of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949.

We believe that the current delicate situation in the Middle East requires that all the parties act with the utmost responsibility and self-control. Violence can only engender more violence. Israel and the Palestinian Authority must persevere in the implementation of the agreements reached at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit. The international community must do everything in its power to help the parties put an end to the violence.

We support the immediate deployment and immediate action on the part of the fact-finding committee presided over by Senator Mitchell, and we believe that the earlier it begins its work, the more positive the impact it will have in bringing about peace in the region.

In this context, we also want to express Argentina's full support for the work being carried out by the Secretary-General, to whom this Council gave a clear and broad mandate last Friday to explore with the parties concrete measures to put an end to the violence. Although the short-term objective is to put an end to the violence, we cannot lose sight of the fact that the ultimate objective is the resumption of the peace negotiations and a definitive resolution of the question of Palestine on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions and agreements between the parties.

Mr. Kuchynski (Ukraine): Ukraine remains deeply concerned over the further deterioration of the situation in the Middle East. We are appalled by the daily news of new casualties among the innocent civilian population. My country was shocked by the latest massive rocket attack by Israel, which used heavy weaponry against Palestinian Authority facilities and other buildings in Gaza and the West Bank. Ukraine condemns such acts of excessive and indiscriminate use of force, and urges Israel to stop them immediately and unconditionally. Everything should be done to ensure full respect by Israel for the Fourth Geneva Convention. We also call on the Palestinians to demonstrate restraint and refrain from any violent actions. We condemn all acts of violence and terrorism. We are convinced that there is no alternative to returning to the negotiating table and implementing the Sharm el-Sheikh summit understanding.

It is our conviction that the solution to the question of Palestine should be based on the full implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as the Madrid Peace Conference formula and the Oslo accords. My country supports the constructive engagement of the Secretary-General in the current crisis and strongly encourages him to continue his efforts to try to find ways to stop the violence and bring the parties back to the negotiating table. We look forward to the early commencement of the activities of the fact-finding committee.

My country also welcomes the declaration of 20 November by the Foreign Ministers of the European Union. We share in the growing perception that the Security Council should take further measures to bring the situation to normalcy and ensure the implementation by the parties of resolution 1322 (2000).

My delegation is in agreement with the assessment that, given the further worsening of the situation, the presence of a third party, representing the international community, is critically important if we are to avert a large-scale war in the whole region. In our view, under current circumstances, the idea of deploying a United Nations observer mission, as proposed by France, is becoming increasingly topical.

Finally, my country, which continues to be involved in bilateral consultations on the issue with the parties concerned, stands ready to contribute further to efforts aimed at bringing the ongoing crisis in the Middle East to an end.

Mr. Misran (Malaysia): I, like other speakers before me, thank you most sincerely, Mr. President, for convening this meeting, and particularly for responding at very short notice to a request by a State Member of the United Nations for a meeting of the Council on the grave situation in Palestine. This augurs well for the credibility of the Council in the eyes of the larger membership of the United Nations.

We look forward to the statement which the representative of South Africa will make later on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The grave situation in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory must be addressed immediately by the international community, especially this Council. The spiral of violence that was triggered a few days ago must be stopped once and for all. The unleashing of the disproportionate response by the Israeli security forces on Gaza City and on the Palestinian people clearly signals the intent of the Israeli Government to wage a kind of war against Palestinian civilians.

Malaysia will continue to work with the other members of this Council to take immediate, concrete measures, including the immediate establishment of a United Nations observer force to ensure the safety and lives of innocent Palestinian civilians. We believe that a United Nations presence on the ground would be the best, speediest and most effective mechanism to help de-escalate the violence in the occupied Palestinian territory. Clearly, the present efforts to stop the violence, including those on the bilateral track, have not produced effective results so far.

This Council must carry out its solemn duty and act to protect civilians. We have repeatedly stated this fact in our previous resolutions and statements on the question of Palestine and the protection of civilians in armed conflict, and we must play our part to the fullest.

Last Friday we mandated the Secretary-General to explore the proposal to deploy a United Nations observer force to the region. But the Council cannot rest on its laurels; it must also give its full support to the establishment of the observer force. We must encourage and convince the parties concerned — those Council members that have great influence and leverage with the parties to the conflict could play a particular role in this regard — to accept such a United Nations presence on the ground.

I could not agree more with Ambassador Holbrooke that we need the consent of the host country when we deploy United Nations peace operations. He cited Indonesia in the case of East Timor and the visit of a mission to West Timor. But I wish only to tell Ambassador Holbrooke that the difference is that in the case of Palestine Israel is clearly the occupying Power — the only occupying Power in this modern era. Palestine is an occupied territory; that is a fact.

Of course, for practical reasons, we would need the cooperation of the Israeli Government to ensure the effective performance of a United Nations observer force on the ground. To this end, we call on Israel to give its full cooperation to the establishment of a United Nations observer force, if Israel is really serious in its intention to stop the violence and to restore calm and peace. After all, it would also be for the good of the people of Israel.

A just and lasting peace can be achieved only with the complete withdrawal of Israel's armed forces and illegal settlers from all Arab and Palestinian lands occupied since 1967, including the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the occupied Syrian Golan. The people of Palestine have the inalienable right to establish an independent and sovereign State of their own, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its undisputed capital. To this end, Malaysia calls on Israel to comply with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1322 (2000), and all other relevant resolutions.

For more than 50 years the question of the plight of the Palestinian people has been on the international agenda. The failure of the international community to redress the injustices committed against the Palestinian people will only prolong the instability and violence in the region. The Council must act now to stop the violence and to allow the peoples in region to live in an atmosphere of peace, harmony and progress.

Let us not forget that this Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. We must live up to our obligations. The Council's credibility is at stake. To date about 250 people have been killed, including women and children, mostly Palestinians, as a result of the

disproportionate and excessive use of force by Israeli security forces. Malaysia deeply mourns these tragic deaths and offers its deepest condolences to the bereaved families.

How many more deaths and injuries of innocent civilians, women and children, and how much more violence do we need to witness before the Council can act? Let us not repeat the mistakes that were made in the past in the case of the tragedies in Rwanda and Srebrenica because of the paralysis of this Council.

Mr. Heinbecker (Canada): Thank you, Sir, for providing this opportunity for the Security Council to discuss the very dangerous situation that prevails in the Middle East.

The Government of Canada is deeply concerned about the escalation in fighting between Israelis and Palestinians. We call on both sides to do their part to end the violence which has caused so many injuries and so much death.

The cycle of action and reaction — which has been so appallingly in evidence again today and in the past few days in Israel and the West Bank and Gaza, and which has exposed civilians, including children, to such terrible risk and harm — must be stopped. We offer our condolences to the families of the victims.

Each side has an obligation to protect civilians. This imperative cuts both ways: civilians must not be made targets, nor must civilians engage in hostilities and provoke, or expose themselves to, a forceful response.

I wish to be perfectly clear: we condemn all the violence. We hold both sides responsible for ending it. The Palestinian Authority must do everything in its power to prevent terrorist attacks from occurring. According to the draft resolution on terrorism adopted today by the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly, "all acts, methods and practices of terrorism" are "criminal and unjustifiable, wherever and by whomsoever committed". Canada condemns all such terrorist attacks, and we invite all parties wanting peace also to condemn such attacks.

For its part, the Government of Israel must do everything in its power to restrain its forces, to use proportionate force and to refrain from escalation.

Canada believes that the best chance for a de-escalation of the situation lies in the prompt implementation of the understandings reached at Sharm el-Sheikh. In that context, Canada expects that the fact-finding committee, as agreed to by Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat at Sharm el-Sheikh, to be launched promptly and to carry out its crucial work in a timely fashion. We welcome the meetings planned for the next days and urge that the committee's work be facilitated.

Canada also supports the Council mandate given to the Secretary-General to explore options with the parties, including an observer presence, possibly building on the work of the fact-finding committee. It is in the interests of peace that the Secretary-General be given the full opportunity to explore these options and to pursue his contacts with the parties and others.

Canada would support any international effort, agreed to by both parties, that would help in easing tensions. Now is the time for the international community to come together in support of peace. If ever there were a time for diplomacy and dialogue, it is now.

The President: I will now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Netherlands.

My delegation associates itself with the statement of the European Union quoted earlier by the Permanent Representative of France. The Netherlands expresses its deep concern and intense sorrow about the latest escalation of violence which we are discussing today. We consider every life lost a tragedy. That is why we want to see an immediate end to the violence on both sides.

There can be no more palpable evidence of the senselessness of the cycle of violence gripping the region than the horrific bomb attack on innocent children in a school bus and the collective punishment for this act meted out against the Palestinian civilian population. We call upon both parties to show courage, not by fighting but by daring to break this vicious cycle.

The international community should not fuel the conflict by inflammatory statements or actions, but should help both sides achieve a just peace that brings real benefits to both peoples.

I acknowledge with appreciation all the compliments addressed to the Dutch presidency for having convened this meeting, but the Netherlands delegation insists that activities of this Council must

not be allowed to interfere with the work done in the context of Sharm el-Sheikh, both by the Secretary-General and by the fact-finding commission.

I now resume my function as President of the Council.

The next speaker is the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Dorda (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) *(spoke in Arabic)*: I would like to extend to you, Sir, my thanks for having responded to the request that I addressed to you on behalf of the Arab Group to convene this meeting. And on behalf of the Arab Group let me say that the question of Palestine — I am not calling it the Middle East question because there is no Middle East question; there is no geography or history of the Middle East. This concept of course exists, but let someone tell me where the Middle East is. The Middle East is a creation designed to replace Palestine and to integrate the occupying State into the region. That is why I am here discussing the question of Palestine rather than the question of the Middle East. The Middle East does not exist in our minds either geographically or historically. The question of Palestine is a question of occupation.

Numerous people have come from various corners of the world to occupy Palestine. The land of Palestine is the land of all religions. It is a question of occupation and must be addressed as such: occupation.

We all are aware of the consecutive wars that have taken place. We all are aware of the political consequences of those wars. And we are all aware of the occupiers' claims that they want peace, not war. They said they were going to strive for the experience of peace, because they are the prophets of peace. The Arabs believe in peace, and the Arabs begin their greetings with a declaration of peace, as I have done at the beginning of my speech.

What is the result of this process, incorrectly labelled the "peace process"? There is a process — that is true — but there is no peace. Why? The negotiations, beginning in Madrid, continuing in Oslo, in Washington and Wye Plantation, in Sharm el-Sheikh and Camp David, as well as all the other venues — all those negotiations have remained a dead letter. From one instrument to another, from one convention to another, from one accord to another, there has been no implementation. This includes the Palestinian Authority; it has no authority. The events have demonstrated this in front of the entire world — the Palestinian Authority has no true authority over its land. Entries and exits from Gaza and the West Bank have been blocked and blockaded by those who actually possess the authority — that is, the occupying Power.

What have the Arab regimes that participated in the peace process ended up with? Three decades have elapsed since the inception of the process and no results whatsoever were achieved. The land of Palestine is still occupied. The Palestinian people are still outside of Palestine. The land has not been restored; refugees have not returned home; Palestinians residing in refugee camps continue to be refugees scattered throughout the world. What kind of peace can be established without restitution of the land? What sort of peace can be concluded without a return of Palestinians to their homes, their work, their schools and their land? Recent events have proven the social truth — that there is a Palestinian people that does reside in its land.

Moreover, what we are witnessing today is not peace but imposition of submission to the conditions dictated by the occupier. Even the Palestinian delegation at Camp David — according to a statement made by Mr. Zaanoun, the head of the Central Palestinian Council here in the United Nations, at a meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) last September — was told by the American team: either you accept these conditions or there will be no recognition of you as a liberation movement. You will be treated as terrorists and we will break our relations with you. We will break off our assistance and our dialogue with you. What kind of peace is this when such conditions are imposed upon the Palestinians? How can it be considered a negotiating process or an equitable negotiation? Can such a process succeed? Can this kind of process lead to a truly peaceful outcome that would restore the rights, land and property, to the injured party?

Between the Israelis and the Arabs, there are those who are armed; these include nuclear armaments, surface-to-air missiles, anti-missile missiles and so forth. Certain parties are given technology, expertise and all kinds of financing — that is, one party, Israel. The other party is prevented, indeed prohibited, from even manufacturing the smallest light weapon, pistol or

rifle. Thus, if there is cooperation from other States in the creation of defensive disarmament, pressures are exerted on the other parties to cease cooperation with the Arab States. What can happen given such an equation? What is happening in the region is an attempt to impose capitulation — not peace. And, if there is such a peace, it cannot be a lasting one, because it is not based on justice, law and equality.

How many resolutions have been adopted by this Council? My brother, the representative of Palestine, has enumerated dozens of them. Pressure has been exerted by the United States not to implement these resolutions. The United States has supported the occupying Power. It is not something to be proud of when a State proffers such support. Why have the dozens of Security Council resolutions not been implemented and applied?

Recently, a Security Council meeting was convened in the wake of the deaths of three people in West Timor, and the representatives of all States stood up to observe a minute of silence or prayer. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya is opposed to the killing of any human being, for whomever they may work. But why has no one done anything about the murder of hundreds of Palestinians? Where was the Council? Is there one kind of peace for some and another kind of peace for others? Are we talking of an international Security Council or a United States National Security Council? We know the answer. But who can pronounce this truth? Fear no one but God, the Almighty, the Creator.

More than 200 martyrs have fallen in Palestine because of the occupation, and no one in the United Nations has lifted a finger, including the Security Council. More than 10,000 people have been injured, maimed and have joined the ranks of the handicapped, as if they were not even human. Meanwhile, those who invoke the principles of human rights say nothing when they take the floor.

And yet, are human beings not the same all over the world? Where are the rights of the Palestinian people? The Economic and Social Council, despite all the pressures brought to bear by the United States delegation, has defended the rights of the Palestinian people. A member of the Economic and Social Council told me today that he was, to all intents and purposes, taken out of the room — abducted, in a sense, to prevent him from voting. So where are these human rights? This is happening today, right here in the United Nations.

There is no hope for peace for the Palestinian people, because they live under occupation. How can we talk about peace in the face of the violence that is taking place in the region and in a situation in which the occupier and the occupied are placed on an equal footing? What is the cause, and what is the effect? Is it the violence that is causing the occupation, or is it the occupation that is causing the violence?

Let us look at the causes. The real cause is occupation, and violence is the effect. To stop the violence is to stop the occupation. What the Palestinians want is their historical rights, which they are free to demand. But not even 20 per cent of their legitimate rights have been given them. Colonies of armed settlers surround their autonomous land and they are prevented from enjoying these rights. How can there be peace if their lands are not restored? Refugees cannot return home. Those Palestinians who are abroad will not come back. So what peace are we speaking of?

The Palestinian Authority has no authority in its own land. The children who are throwing stones were born after 1967, in occupied Palestine. If this is the case with this generation, what will happen to succeeding generations? This will become a cause embraced by all Arab peoples; the events that have occurred in Arab capitals are proof of this.

With respect to establishing relations with Israel, some Arab Governments have succumbed to pressure from the Arab people and have retreated from such relations. No people can accept capitulation. We are advocates of peace. The former United States Secretary of State, James Baker, said this in his book. Read it, and it will become clear. "I ask the Israelis what their positions are. I go to the Arabs and relay that information. Then I go back to the Israelis." This is not our testimony, but that of James Baker.

If the Council is to express, as it should, the will of the international community and if it is to maintain international peace and security, we would ask only one thing of it: that it be just and that it shoulder its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations and its own resolutions, as set forth in the relevant international instruments.

We are not asking for the impossible. We are asking for justice, for our rights, for law.

On behalf of the Arab Group, we ask the following: first, that an international observer force be sent to protect the Palestinian people in the occupied territories; secondly, that a fact-finding mission be sent to inquire into all the acts of violence perpetrated against the Palestinian people, and that the conclusions it reaches be submitted to the International Criminal Court; and thirdly, that the relevant Security Council resolutions be implemented. The Arab Group may be obliged to revisit the question in coming days, with a view to seeing what the Council will do.

Mr. President, I hope that you can take this request into account.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of South Africa. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Vermeulen (South Africa): First of all, I offer my apologies, as Ambassador Kumalo could, unfortunately, not be here this afternoon.

Mr. President, we would like to thank you, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, for calling this very timely meeting. At the outset, we would like to extend our condolences to all the bereaved families who are suffering as a result of the violence in the Middle East.

The Non-Aligned Movement comes before this meeting today and wishes to repeat its call on Israel to stop subjecting the Palestinian civilians to collective punishment. This is in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. We reiterate our call on Israel to act with restraint and to meticulously abide by its legal obligations with respect to the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Just over than a month ago, this body met in emergency session, in accordance with its mandate as the custodian of international peace and security, and adopted resolution 1322 (2000). The resolution called for the establishment of an international inquiry into the conflict. The Non-Aligned Movement believes that the full and expeditious implementation of Security Council resolution 1322 (2000) would go a long way towards proving that the Council is prepared to take decisive action in the maintenance of international peace and security. It is time to seriously consider protecting the Palestinian people.

The Non-Aligned Movement firmly believes that it remains the permanent responsibility of the United Nations to stay fully engaged in the Palestinian question until a definitive solution is achieved. In this regard, we welcome and fully support the important role of the Secretary-General in the pursuit of peace at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit and his efforts in the recent dialogue with both the Israelis and Palestinians. This serves to reaffirm the primacy of the United Nations in global peace and security. We appeal to both parties to respond constructively.

It is incumbent upon the United Nations to adopt measures to protect the Palestinian people and to ensure that actions which exacerbate their suffering not be allowed to continue. The international community has an obligation to this end. We call on the Council to seriously consider the immediate deployment of a protection force to the region.

The question of Palestine constitutes the nucleus of the Middle East conflict. The achievement of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, is pivotal to the achievement of a sustained and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

The Movement believes that peaceful negotiation is the only means of ensuring lasting peace, security and stability in the region. We urge the parties to take the required steps to ensure the cessation of hostilities, to restore calm and to adopt measures to re-establish mutual trust. It is only then that an atmosphere conducive to the resumption of negotiations can be created.

The Ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement, meeting in September in New York during the Millennium Assembly, reaffirmed their determination to actively strive towards the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

In a statement issued in Pretoria yesterday, the South African Government strongly condemned the attack on the Israeli civilian bus two days ago. We equally strongly condemned the disproportionate and excessive retaliatory attacks by the Israeli security force that followed, disturbingly moving the crisis to a precarious new level. We must ask ourselves the question: How much longer can this collective punishment by an occupying, militarily superior

force — in violation of international humanitarian law — be endured by the Palestinian people? Closures, blockades and restrictions imposed by Israel on the movement of goods, persons and resources have resulted in the economic suffocation of the Palestinian people. The crisis has exacted too much suffering and claimed too many innocent lives.

We firmly believe that the condition of land for peace is essential if meaningful progress in the peace process is to be attained. For a durable, just and comprehensive peace, negotiation towards final status issues has to be in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and international legitimacy.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Cuba, Egypt and Jordan, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba), Mr. Aboulgheit (Egypt) and Mr. Al-Hussein (Jordan) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Egypt. I invite him to take seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Aboulgheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Two days ago, on 20 November, Egypt recalled its Ambassador from Tel Aviv following the unacceptable, unprecedented and unjustified intensification of systematic Israeli bombings of Palestinian government buildings and installations in the Gaza Strip. Egypt did so in the hope of sending a clear and categorical message to Israel that Egypt, which initiated the peace process in the Middle East, cannot remain silent and passive in the face of this excessive, intensive and arrogant use of military force against the Palestinian people, its institutions and its property.

A few weeks ago, we warned the Council and the General Assembly of the fact that the deterioration of the situation between the Palestinians and Israelis and Israel's intensive and inexcusable use of deadly retaliatory military force and violence could only lead to more violence. Indeed, the cycle of violence is a vicious circle. The Palestinian people feels frustration, outrage and a sense of injustice under military occupation.

Egypt calls on Israel to fully respect the agreements undertaken at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit with regard to the withdrawal of its heavy weapons from all Palestinian regions and from areas where they are prohibited under bilateral arrangements. Egypt believes that such a step is a fundamental measure for bringing peace to the situation.

Any incident in which civilians on any side are targeted should be condemned by all parties. Egypt certainly condemns and rejects the targeting of Israeli civilians just as forcefully as it condemns the targeting of Palestinian civilians. It would therefore be useful in this respect to emphasize that one of the most important causes of friction between the two parties, making the situation all the more explosive and tense, is the presence of Israeli settlers on Palestinian territory. These are armed civilians who behave provocatively. We have all seen their conduct and heard their positions on our television sets. They are on Palestinian land. Because of this illicit and illegitimate presence, in violation of the resolutions of the Security Council and the norms of international law, the approximately 1 million Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip occupy only 60 per cent of that territory — as the representative of Palestine pointed out today in the Economic and Social Council — because the other 40 per cent is inhabited by approximately 4,000 Israeli settlers. The Council needs to be aware of these facts.

The situation is so grave that it threatens the stability of the entire region. Israel continues to take measures that inflict collective punishment on the Palestinian people, thus running counter to all international instruments and to all its obligations as an occupying Power under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Israel is subjecting the Palestinian people to an economic blockade that is stifling it. It closes off Palestinian territory. Israel is hampering the circulation of food and medication, not to mention the fact that it hampers trade. It cuts off electric power from the whole Gaza Strip. This is a situation that the Security Council must address. It must not lose sight of it

because of its grave consequences for Palestinian civilians.

All these acts must come to an end immediately.

We hope that the fact-finding committee will begin its work soon, now that it has been established in consultation with the Secretary-General, under Senator George Mitchell's chairmanship. We hope its work will begin very soon with a clear and specific plan of work so that it can meet the objective for which it was created.

In conclusion, the series of events in the occupied Palestinian territory requires that the Council keep up with the events. Negotiations and consultations are now taking place among members of the Council and with the Secretary-General as well, whose efforts we appreciate. These consultations are aimed at agreeing on the establishment and deployment of a United Nations observer force, which would contribute to ensuring the protection and security of the Palestinian people in the face of these recurring Israeli acts of aggression.

This is precisely the idea that had been advocated by the Arab Summit in its declaration of 22 October last.

Egypt, for its part, calls upon the Council to assume its responsibilities and obligations under the Charter and to adopt the draft resolution that we hope will be introduced by the Non-Aligned Caucus of the Council in the next few days.

I am profoundly concerned and disturbed to hear the representative of Israel say today that his country is not convinced of the usefulness of this observer or protection force.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Jordan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Al Hussein (Jordan) *(spoke in Arabic)*: It gives me great pleasure to begin my statement by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the Presidency of the Security Council for this month. I am confident that your wisdom and wide experience and your ability will lead to the desired success of our work. I also wish to express my deep appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Martin Andjaba of Namibia, for the skilful way in which he guided the work of the Council during his presidency. I also wish to express my thanks to you, Mr. President, for convening this emergency session at the request of the Arab Group and the Movement of the Non-Aligned.

The convening of this meeting at this time to grapple with the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories is an expression of the keen interest of the Council and of its perception of the gravity of recent events that pose a threat to our area. This is indeed another link in the cycle of violence and bloodshed.

His Majesty, King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein, warned of such events and of their implications for the peace process. They bear witness to the need in the Middle East for peace and the need on the part of the Palestinian people to rid itself of the yoke of oppression and occupation that has lasted so long.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan strongly condemns the violence perpetrated against the Palestinians in the occupied territories as reflected in the occupation and the oppressive practices on the part of the occupation forces of Israel.

Israel has escalated its acts of aggression and bombarded, by land, sea and air, the Palestinians and Palestinian institutions and civilian installations. There was also an act of aggression against the office of the Jordanian representative in Gaza. This incident is indeed regrettable. Jordan regrets the death of civilians on both sides.

What is taking place in the occupied territories nourishes excesses and provocative acts. Such acts at the hands of forces that reject peace in Israel against the Palestinians could embroil the entire area in more violence and tension and thus undermine the peace process and could return the area to conflict, to violence, hostility and enmity.

The Jordanian Government calls upon Israel immediately to stop all acts of violence, to lift the siege from Palestinian towns, to implement existing agreements and the relevant Security Council resolutions, and to respect the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949. It views as necessary the prompt dispatch of a fact-finding mission and the creation and deployment, under United Nations auspices, of an international observer force in the occupied territories.

The King, the Government and the people of Jordan reaffirm their support for the fraternal

Palestinian people in its endeavour to gain its legitimate rights and to establish an independent State of its own on its national territory, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

On behalf of my Government, I convey our heartfelt condolences to the Palestinian leadership and to the fraternal Palestinian people with respect to their martyred brethren.

The President: I thank the representative of Jordan for the kind words he addressed to me and to my predecessor.

The next speaker is the representative of Cuba. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall speak first in my capacity as Acting Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Dozens of resolutions have been adopted, clearly reflecting the will of the majority. Recent examples include the Council's own resolution 1322 (2000) and General Assembly resolution ES-10/7. The Arab summit held in Egypt on 21 and 22 October 2000 expressed itself on this matter, and on 19 October the Commission on Human Rights adopted its resolutions S-5/1 on the subject.

There was no alternative but to resume the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, which adopted its resolution ES-10/7 on 20 October. Inter alia, the Assembly condemned the excessive use of force by the Israeli forces and called upon the members of the Security Council to follow the situation closely, including the implementation of resolution 1322 (2000). Furthermore, the Economic and Social Council voted today to endorse the 9 October decision of the Commission on Human Rights.

The Secretary-General too has played and continues to play a very important role in the search for a solution to the crisis. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People hails his efforts and urges that they continue.

Yet the use of force has increased rather than declining. In recent days, Israeli occupation forces have stepped up their activities against the Palestinian population, launching massive air, sea and land attacks. Serious violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, continue.

In earlier Council debates on this item, many delegations spoke of the shocking images seen by all of the murder of the child Mohammed Al-Durra. Since then, many other children and other innocent civilians have died. In the two months of violence that resulted from the provocative visit to Al-Haram Al-Sharif on 28 September, there have been more than 270 deaths and 7,000 casualties, the vast majority of them Palestinians.

Had Israel implemented the many Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the question of Palestine, we would not now be witnessing the current critical situation in the occupied territories.. At the private meeting of the Security Council held on 10 November, the President of the Palestinian Authority described in detail the deteriorating situation on the ground and clearly set out the reasons why a protection force of observers needed to be deployed immediately.

Israeli practices and policies denying the legitimate needs and aspirations of the Palestinian people will never be compatible with a legitimate peace process based on resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). There can be no just and lasting peace in the Middle East until the Palestinian people exercise their legitimate right to establish an independent State with its capital in East Jerusalem, until all the occupied Arab territories are returned, and until Israel withdraws from the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and the Syrian Golan, to the lines of 4 June 1967. There will be no lasting peace until provocations in southern Lebanon cease, until Arab prisoners and detainees are released from Israeli jails, and until Israeli settlements are removed in conformity with resolution 465 (1980).

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Republic of Cuba.

We hail the President of the Security Council for the month of October, the representative of Namibia, for the effective manner in which he guided the important work of the Council during his presidency.

It is interesting to note how some Council members — so eager to promote the notion of carrying out "humanitarian intervention" with or without Security Council authorization whenever they decide that there is a worrying human rights situation to be remedied — have lost all their enthusiasm in this case

and are manoeuvring to stop the Security Council and the General Assembly from using their powers under the Charter. There could be no better illustration of the interests that so-called humanitarian interventions really serve.

Everybody knows that a different standard applies to Israel. This is a typical case of what happens when the United States, a permanent member of the Security Council and Israel's ally, seeks to further its national interests by making arbitrary use of its powers and prerogatives. Hypocrisy and double standards reign, protected by the obsolete and anti-democratic privilege of the veto.

Cuba supports the position of Council members that are also members of the Non-Aligned Movement and of other members of the Security Council that have been making sincere efforts to ensure that the Council shoulder its responsibilities. Cuba calls upon the Security Council to act without further delay, in a way commensurate with the situation and with its lofty responsibilities. The Council should immediately set up an observer force to protect Palestinian civilians. It should demand that Israel halt its acts of force and implement the many Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the question of the Middle East.

That is the only path leading to a just and lasting peace.

The President: I call on the representative of Israel, who has asked for the floor.

Mr. Lancry (Israel) (*spoke in French*): The Palestinian Authority has made a choice that no longer leaves any shadow of a doubt. That choice is for violent confrontation, which nourishes and supports the other strategic choice adopted and declared openly by Chairman Arafat during the Islamic conference held at Doha last week. That strategic choice is what he called the intifada of independence.

While Prime Minister Barak committed himself at Camp David to a bold enterprise aimed at ending the conflict with the Palestinians, Chairman Arafat has made a devastating choice, namely, to achieve his political ends through fire and blood. Although on 9 September 1993 — the eve of the signing of the Oslo Accords — the same Chairman Arafat committed himself in a letter to Prime Minister Rabin to renounce terrorism as a means of achieving political objectives, he seems to have quickly returned to the same abject practices he employed in the past that had lastingly disqualified from being Israel's interlocutor.

With calculated and refined ambiguity, an order, instruction, command or allusion from Mr. Arafat invariably lends itself to interpretation on different levels. The double and triple language of Chairman Arafat — one for the international community, another for his people and a third for his entourage — is very difficult to decipher. We should therefore not be surprised to see Mr. Arafat asking, on the one hand, for an international protection force while, on the other, releasing terrorists from his own prisons and pitting them against Israel while stepping away from their actions. Chairman Arafat's absurd dance and convoluted language cannot continue forever to mislead either his peace partners — the Israelis — or the international community, which, at its most inspired and objective, will not be misled indefinitely by his twists and turns or his shadowy actions.

For the first time since the beginning of this crisis, we see from the statements of several members of the Council the semblance of reproach for the various inadmissible and indescribable acts carried out by Palestinians in recent days at Kfar Naum and Hadera. We take good note of that. Whether those statements in disapproval of Palestinian terrorist acts are muted or amplified, we believe that the fact they were made is important because it represents a more just approach towards both sides. In that regard, the statements by the representatives of Argentina and Canada in particular seem to us exemplary in their relevance.

We also take good note of the virtually unanimous appeal for a return to calm and negotiations. I must recall that before Israel put legitimate self-defence measures into place, the Government had been trying to implement its peace policy. As the international community knows full well, Prime Minister Barak adopted a very innovative peace policy at Camp David, one conducive to putting an end to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Before the helicopters and the tanks, Mr. Barak had offered an unprecedented peace proposal that would have made the intangible concrete and the previously untouchable tangible. Huge obstacles related to the various issues involved in achieving a definitive solution of the conflict were thus beginning to be lifted at the time Chairman Arafat chose to revert to violence and terrorism.

I want to be clear: through a negotiated solution at Camp David Chairman Arafat could have, through terms agreed upon by both sides to benefit both parties, given rise to the advent of a Palestinian State next to Israel and to the beginning of true reconciliation between the two peoples. That solution was conditioned on the fact that it was to be achieved through a bilateral Israeli-Palestinian agreement, and that solution is not very far from our reach. In large part, although not entirely, that solution is up to Chairman Arafat and his willingness to respect the same commitments that made him a partner to the dialogue with Israel.

But it was not we Israelis who froze that peace. However, we can reach that peace only with a partner who is committed to becoming part of the history of coexistence, and not that of recoiling in rejection and negation of the other. Israel has made the choice for peace and has signed agreements with Egypt and Jordan.

Moreover, the Interim Agreements that followed the Oslo Accords resulted in various achievements through which 98 per cent of Palestinians in Gaza and the main cities and hundreds of villages of the West Bank now live under the control of the Palestinian Authority, rather than under occupation. The choice of territorial compromise, of a definite solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, of coexistence and of reconciliation is a choice that Israel wants to implement as soon as possible. That is the goal towards which we should turn our efforts. If this appeal were to be heard today, we would at least make some progress today.

The President: I call on the Permanent Observer of Palestine, who has asked for the floor.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Permanent Observer of Palestine has asked for the floor once again because he wishes to express dismay with regard to the second statement made by the representative of Israel. During our debates at the United Nations — including those in the Security Council — we have always tried to avoid mentioning persons and personal matters while discussing issues. I would hope that we could be as objective as possible.

The Israeli party chooses again to attack the Palestinian leader, who is the elected President of the Palestinian people. I do not exactly know what objective can be achieved by doing that, except to fire more deadly bullets into the peace process or the hope for peace. What is wrong with the leader of the Palestinian people calling for independence? What is wrong with the intifada and independence? That may have been wrong for Israel, but fortunately not for the international community. The intifada that lasted seven years was a non-violent communal expression of the Palestinian people, and its rejection of the occupation and its insistence on the right to self-determination and to establish its own State.

Defenceless civilian Palestinians have paid a high price for the intifada, of which we are proud. We are proud of our people. We are proud of our sacrifices. There is nothing wrong with that. This collective and principled position of our people is correct.

The representative of Israel wishes to continue talking about persons. Perhaps it behooves us to recall the record of Mr. Ehud Barak, the Israeli Prime Minister; that man, who allowed the ill-fated visit of Ariel Sharon on 28 September 2000; the man who conspired with Ariel Sharon to permit this visit although he knew its implications beforehand; the man who follows the doctrine "timeout from the peace process" and who has a declared position to end the peace process, even for a short time; the general who has "a pin-point strike doctrine", as if the Palestinian people were mere objects and targets against whom he can practise his advanced military theories; the Prime Minister who did not observe one promise with the other negotiating party; the person who did not implement any of the agreements concluded.

Mr. Barak did not withdraw one centimetre from the Palestinian territories, except the ones that Mr. Netanyahu had agreed to withdraw from. Mr. Barak stopped the peace process with the Wye River process. He did not advance even one centimetre in implementing the agreements between the two parties. Finally, he is the man who leads us now to the brink of catastrophe. Ask Israeli commentators and Israeli political forces about what is being said of his great leadership.

We do not object to what has been stated today about the events in Israel. We have always stated our rejection of all acts committed against Israeli civilians. We have condemned terrorist acts in all their aspects, including State terrorism and terrorism caused by the occupation itself. To a great extent we do not oppose what has been said about the bus incident in Gaza

because children are children, regardless of their nationality. No one wishes to inflict harm on any child, but is it not our right to remind you that the children who were injured on the Israeli bus were fewer that the 80 Palestinian children who were killed at the hands of the Israeli occupation? Eighty Palestinian children have been killed by the Israeli occupation forces. Where is the equality here? Where is the fairness?

There are two things we do not accept. The first thing we deem untenable is for anyone to think that the Israeli child is more precious than the Palestinian child. The second matter is that we refuse to absolve the Israeli Government of its direct responsibility for these acts because they bring settlers, including their children, in an illegal manner that contravenes the Security Council and the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prevents the transference of population. They come to occupy a territory. They collect fewer than 5,000 settlers to occupy about 40 per cent of the Gaza Strip. Do you know how big the Gaza Strip is? 360 square kilometres of arid, fallow land devoid of any natural resources, including water. In addition to that, 40 per cent of the other land is under Israeli occupation, where fewer than 5,000 Israeli settlers reside illegally. Is this a natural occupation? No. Is this apartheid? No. This is a unique event, unprecedented in contemporary history, which will later be called the Israeli occupation with all its deep and painful implications resulting from the aforementioned Israeli practices.

They are directly responsible for these events. The occupation is the source of these events. The violation of international law is also the cause of these events. Finally, I hope that people will not only remember the Israelis who died or only the five injured Israeli children. We condemn that. But we do not want people to remember them only and for things to stop there. How about the scores of Palestinian children who were killed in cold blood by snipers, at the hands of the occupation soldiers? You must have read several reports. There were several films on that issue. Their plight is indeed sad.

I did not intend to delve into all these matters, in order to remain at a level becoming of the Council, but the Israeli representative insists on dragging the matter on in this way. This is unfortunate and should end. But the end comes through a change in the mentality of the occupier. Peace requires mutual respect and recognition of the existence and equal rights of the other party. This is what the approach should be, rather than addressing the other party in a condescending manner, as if to say I am the master, I am the occupier, while the other party must understand that the Security Council will be of no avail to it and international law will be useless and that crying and pain will also be useless. But he has to defer to the master because the master is the one who will grant him something that he should accept. But this is untenable. The beginning of change starts with a change in mentality, by recognizing that there is an occupation and by accepting the other as an equal as well as by accepting his dignity.

In conclusion, we wish to thank all the members of the Security Council and all those others who spoke in the Council. I wish in particular to express our appreciation for the statement made on behalf of the European Union. We agree with that statement. We are ready to work with the members of the European Union and other members, as well as with all the parties concerned that are ready to make efforts to resolve the situation and to reach peace in the Middle East region.

The President: There are no further speakers on my list.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 7.10 p.m.